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AUTHOR Gonzalez, Virginia
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ABSTRACT

This paper relates the personal and professional experiences of a female minority ethnic researcher in her transition from international graduate student to assistant professor in the United States. It examines coping strategies for such situations, including: (1) assuming that most problems have an external sociohistorical nature; (2) realizing the central role of mentorship; (3) refraining from replying to expressions of stereotypic views and using energy and time more productively; (4) receiving and responding selectively to student and collegial feedback; (5) being proactive in the establishment of collaborative activities; and (6) having long-term research and career development objectives. Junior female minority faculty need to assume responsibility and an advocacy role for creating a new era of equality and change in academe and in multicultural America. (MDM)

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# From Graduate Student to Ethnic Researcher: Multiple Challenges

**Virginia Gonzalez**
Assistant Professor
Educational Psychology Department
The University of Arizona

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Running Head: MULTIPLE CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This position paper highlights the additive nature of idiosyncratic characteristics of junior female minority ethnic researchers on problems encountered in academic life. Coping strategies are discussed in light of literature, and include: (1) to assume that most problems have an external sociohistorical nature, (2) to realize the central role of mentorship, (3) to stop replying to expressions of stereotypic views and to use energy and time more productively, (4) to receive and respond selectively to collegial and student feedback, (5) to be proactive for establishing collaborative activities, and (6) to have clear long-term research and career development objectives. I conclude by recognizing the need for junior female minority faculty to assume responsibility and an advocacy role for creating a new era of equality and change in academe and in multicultural America.

From Graduate Student to Ethnic Researcher: Multiple Challenges

The message that I want to communicate in this position paper is that idiosyncratic characteristics of new faculty, such as gender, minority status, and advocating non-traditional research areas as ethnic research; are additive for evoking unique reactions and experiences lived on campus. I will present my experiences in transitional phases, from being a graduate student to becoming a junior faculty member. Emphasis will be given to problems encountered, such as need for mentors and being a mentor for minority students; to coping strategies learned and mentors found, and to raise practical issues for planning a better future. Presently, there is a great need for discussing similar experiences of junior minority faculty in order to generate a support group for networking, mentoring, and discussing possible coping strategies. Then, sharing our isolated individual experiences and discussing the commonalties have important practical implications for improving our future as an academic group.

Thus, I consider that it is important for us, minority junior faculty, to tell our stories, so that we can create a support group for other individuals in the same situation who are just beginning their academic life, such as undergraduate and graduate students and newly hired faculty. Indeed, it is especially crucial to deliver the message to newly hired minority faculty who need to realize that most of the problems that they will be facing in academic life may not be related to some internal personal characteristics. Instead, most of these problems may be related to being viewed by some colleagues and students as a symbol representing sociopolitical, cultural, philosophical, ideological, and educational issues opposing the maintenance of the status quo that some individuals so desperately defend and belief in within academic settings. It is indeed important for junior minority faculty to experience a major insight when facing problems in academic life, which can be summarized in the liberating phrase: It is not only me! Thus, it is after establishing communication among us, that we realize that what we may have been considering personal problems, are actually external sociopolitical problems that are

affecting all of us. Thus, in order to overcome these external problems, we need to learn coping strategies and to establish mentorship relationships since we are students.

With the purpose of narrating my own story as an example for vicarious learning for other junior minority colleagues and students, I will refer to the transitional phases of becoming a graduate student and then a faculty member. I will label the first transitional phase, "becoming an international student", in which I was actively searching for a mentor who could offer guidance to succeed in academia. The second transitional phase of becoming a junior faculty member, I have labeled "from ambassador to minority". I was treated differently as my status changed from being an international student to what academia considered to be a female minority new faculty member. I have labeled the third phase "the great insight, sharing our problems", as I began to hear similar problematic experiences lived by other minority scholars when my networking experience began. The fourth and for now last phase, I have labeled "overcoming, using coping strategies in academic life", as I have learned how to face challenging external problems.

Becoming an "International" Student

I came to this country in 1986 in order to pursue my dream: to become a graduate student and ultimately a scholar. When I came to this country to pursue my graduate studies, I became an "international student", which is the title that American universities give to foreign students. This title has the connotation of individuals representing their countries of origin while being given the privilege to study in leading universities in many academic areas. I am originally from Lima-Perú, South America, and my first language is Spanish. However, I grew up in a bilingual elementary and secondary Spanish/Italian school because of educational value given by my parents to bilingualism. Thus, I became interested in my research topic, cognitive and language development in bilingual children, due to my own life experiences. When I was an adolescent and later

as a young adult doing my undergraduate studies in Psychology, I became interested in learning English due to its educational value for my career, and also because I felt attracted by the values of freedom and equality representing the American spirit.

When I came to the United States, my cultural identity became even stronger, as I realize how much my Spanish language and Hispanic culture defined me as an individual. In fact, the experience of having contact with several ethnic groups within the American Hispanic community lead me to an important realization. I came to understand that regardless of our country of origin or ethnic group, it was amazing to experience how much we, Hispanics, shared a common cultural background such as our language. I have always have been proud of being a Hispanic due to growing up in a social environment that valued and celebrated my cultural identity. Thus, I have always had a strong self-esteem and self-concept provided by my identification with a strong and valued cultural Hispanic group.

However, coming to the United States, provided me with different experiences in relation to how my cultural identity was perceived and used to attribute me some characteristics. Thus, I became an "ambassador" of the Hispanic culture, and I was treated as a visitor who represented this identity for the university community within the American society. I would like to portray this newly acquired "ambassador" role by providing two common questions asked by some majority faculty and students: Have you experienced "cultural shock"?, Do you plan to stay in the United States? I could not help but react emotionally to these questions, as they expressed lack of understanding of my Hispanic cultural identity, and the reason why I came to this country. I had never experienced "cultural shock", as I was very familiar with the American culture, because my native culture and language are also part of the American multiculturalism. In fact, living in the Southwest provided me with a familiar environment in which the Hispanic culture and the Spanish language surrounded me. These two common questions generated in me an emotional reaction because they expressed misconceptions and lack of

knowledge of my Hispanic cultural background. I was not an alien or "extraterrestrial" who was in need of being "acculturated", neither was I a colonizer who wanted to conquer this territory.

At that point in time, I thought that my success in academia depended uniquely on my intrinsic motivation, perseverance effort, and time commitment in order to discover new knowledge and to enjoy academic life. It took me a while to realize that there were many other external factors involved, and that the most important one was finding a mentor. My journey was not always full of happy memories, I had a hard time finding my niche, and finding a mentor who would guide my efforts. I tried to approach some professors, some women, some minority, some with common interests; but it was somehow frustrating not to find in most minority and majority faculty the commitment, advocacy, and empathy that defines a mentor. However, I was very fortunate to find few unique individuals who became my mentors during my graduate years, and who help me unconditionally to overcome external obstacles. Some of these barriers were academic in nature, such as the usual events that my fellow classmates and I had to endure in order "to find light at the end of the tunnel." This latter metaphor was the favorite way that my fellow classmates and I used to describe our barriers, when there were times in which we did not know whether we were going forward or backward in our academic studies. Common events for all of us, graduate students at that point in time, would be to balance our economic and academic needs by finding a teaching or research job on campus, to face difficult and stressful transitional periods (e.g., taking our qualifying exams, taking and passing challenging courses) while working and doing our masters' thesis or dissertations at the same time. However, the most challenging problem that we had to endure was to find a mentor. It is certainly true for me that without this important role modeling and guidance my graduate experience would have been meaningless.

From the few mentors that I could find during my graduate years, I would like to refer more specifically to the most meaningful mentorship relationship that I could

establish as a graduate student. At the department that I was in during my doctoral studies there was not a faculty member who had my exact same academic interests in language and cognitive development in bilingual children. However, there was a professor with some interests in second language learning, who was a preferred advisor for many students already. So, due to much competence around, I had to convince and prove to her that although our interests did not exactly match, we could work productively together. She was hesitant at first, but due to my perseverance pretty soon we became close friends and enjoyed many hours working together in our research projects. I have received from this mentor guidance for improving my writing and research skills; but most importantly emotional support and personal advise for my career plans when time for dissertation work, graduation, and job search finally came around. My former mentor was a woman, and although she had immigrated with her family to the United States from Montreal when she was a child, and her first language at the time of immigration was other than English, she was not considered a minority. Besides our gender and our bilingual background, there was another similarity among us, both our spouses were in academia. So that my mentor understood perfectly what it meant to be a dual career couple looking for academic positions.

The presence of a committed mentor proved to be essential for me when dissertation time came around. Currently there are many minority graduate students who never complete their dissertations. I believe that the major reason is the lack of mentorship in the form of support and investment of time and care through the intensive work that completion of a dissertation requires. My mentor believed in me and supported my efforts by keeping the pace as "I was running through the end of the tunnel" while following a plan that we had developed "to see light." Progress was made, and the final day came in which I became a doctor. My first reaction was to tell my mentor that I did not feel any different. To this comment, she replied: "You will feel different when you will have your own students who will also rely on you." I left, but I always come back to

my former mentor, who has become a friend and colleague, when I have succeed or when I have problems.

Now, I have come to realize the reason why my former mentor enjoys having such special friendship with her students. Finally, I have understood what mentorship within academic life really means: to initiate people in scholarly activities by playing the role of models and advocates, and then by stepping back when they can succeed by themselves in the real academic world. I have come to understand now while working with my students, as my mentor did with me, that one of the most rewarding and important experiences in academic life is to learn and discover new knowledge together with students. In these academic friendships any other external sociopolitical issues are left behind. Although, reality is different for other academic responsibilities, when we speak about commitment for mentoring students, we can be certain that this endeavor really depends on internal factors that we can control. The legacy of my mentor is a model that I have adopted; and that using Erik Erickson's model I would interpret as the generative period in adulthood, because we rejoice in guiding younger generations to become "adult scholars."

From "Ambassador" to "Minority"

I have always experience transitional periods in my life, and one of the most challenging has been to become an assistant professor. The minute I began looking for a job in American universities, my journey into a different ethnic categorization began: suddenly, I became a "minority". Even though my cultural identity had not change at all, I was perceived differently. I felt that I was treated differently because now my newly acquired "minority" status was used by committee members to attribute me some stereotyped characteristics which prevented them from perceiving me as an individual. I felt that my academic qualifications were buried among stereotypic views of female minority individuals. The questions that prospective employers would ask me changed

completely in comparison to the questions I was once asked as an "ambassador." The new questions referred to my newly acquired "minority" background and to my gender: Are you the first one in your family to hold a higher education degree?, Is your spouse "movable"? As these two questions illustrate, magically I had been transformed in the eyes of members of the university community to an individual whose minority, female, and dual career couple status formed a central part of her new given identity.

The common perception of people in academe was that my minority status preceded my academic qualifications as a factor for hiring me; and that due to being a female, my career had a secondary status in comparison to my husband's career. I came to understand that academic life was still harder for women with a dual career couple status even in the 1990's. Presently, university regulations and policies are still far from facing the changing reality of the growing number of dual career couples among the pool of applicants for academic positions. I think that resilience is one of the most important coping strategies that dual career couples in academia can use in order to continue persevering even while experiencing frustration.

My first year as an assistant professor was very challenging, not only because of my academic load; but primarily because of lack of mentors, and to what my identity of being a female minority junior faculty meant for some of my colleagues. I had inherited a history that I was not even aware of. I began my career in academia with the naive idea that I had an academic position and that being a good colleague meant being a good scholar, regardless of what my background was. I also used to think that if I did my job the best I could, everything else and everybody else would be fine and fair. I was very distant from what in actuality prove to be the "lived academic experience for a female junior minority scholar."

Now, that I have overcome my initial situation, and that some time has passed allowing me to disengage from emotional reactions, I can analyze my experiences more "objectively". I started experiencing problems, but now the questions coming from some

of my colleagues and students took a different form: Who are you, a female minority, to teach me, a male (or female) from a majority background?, Who do you think you are, a junior female new faculty member, to become mentor of other students and to pretend to bring change to this place? In the eyes of some colleagues and students I represented some categories for which, based on their experiences, they had formed strong prejudices. Problems were created for me for which the cause was perceived to be internal, a situation that really drained me emotionally. But I have always had a strong self-concept and a high self-esteem in relation to my Hispanic identity, which also this time made me find "light at the end of the tunnel."

The Great Insight: Sharing our Problems

The story of how I could cope with my professional situation refers to a long journey in which mentors prove to be a key factor, as had happened during my graduate years. I still remember going to the 1993 American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting at the end of my first academic year, with many questions about my professional identity. I came back "awakened" by an enlightening experience which I can summarize in the phrase: It is not only me!! Several events happened that year at AERA as I was actively seeking answers to questions referring to my professional identity that resulted from my experience as a new faculty member. I spoke with other female and male minority colleagues, some junior and some senior, and every one of them had a similar story to tell. I realized that we were together in this battle and that there were major external sociohistorical and political problems associated with our presence in academe that were affecting each one of us. My realization that problems were not internal but external was reaffirmed by most minority faculty and some sensitive majority colleagues.

I want to refer particularly to an enlightening event during the 1993 AERA Annual Meeting, Dr. Amado Padilla's presentation (see Padilla, 1993). I could not believe

what I was hearing, as Dr. Padilla was describing the same exact experience that I was living through as a junior minority faculty member. Padilla (see Padilla, 1993, 1994, the latter is an article based on his AERA 1993 presentation) discussed the professional dilemmas that affect junior faculty and students when making decisions on whether or not to pursue and identify with ethnic research. Padilla (1993, 1994) also spoke about the centrality of mentorship for supporting the efforts of scholars in their early career years. Moreover, Padilla (1993, 1994) stated his preoccupation for the presence of only few senior mentors available to support junior faculty. It has been my experience that many scholars from majority and/or minority backgrounds can play the role of mentors of minority students and faculty if they are committed to play an emphatic advocacy role. I could not find an ethnic researcher from a minority background who could play the role of mentor for me during my graduate studies, but I did found a female scholar sensitive to minority issues who was willing to devote her time and energy to support my research efforts.

Padilla (1993, 1994) stated that in many cases mentors are in much need of support as their mentees. I have experience that situation myself, and I think that what we need is a support group system that works as a chain, so that mentors and mentees can re-energize in order to play advocacy roles for younger generations. Padilla (1993, 1994) also identified as dilemmas for the junior ethnic researcher finding the "right" journal in which to publish. This is a very common dilemma that we face that derives from the traditional mainstream research view that attributes value only to publications in standard refereed journals. Padilla (1993, 1994) asserted that this traditional criteria for assigning value to research is faulty, as the peer review process of these standard refereed journals serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy for "excluding research that does not conform to acceptable paradigms or methodologies" (p.25). Padilla (1993, 1994) called for the need to create our own knowledge base, associations, and journals that represent the new research paradigm created by ethnic researchers. We differ from mainstream research in

a number of ways, beginning with departing from different philosophical paradigms, having different research objectives and applications (e.g., understanding minority groups and not doing cross-cultural comparisons), having different motivations and interests, and having different professional and personal identities, etc.

While Dr. Amado Padilla was delivering his presentation, I was rejoicing while thinking: It is not only me! It is us! It is an external problem! It is not only my problem! It is our problem! We will overcome this challenge! I came back that April to campus as a new person. I had had an awakening experience that would led me to learn how to overcome the challenge: using coping strategies. I hope that reading this article can also bring a meaningful insightful experience for minority colleagues who may be fighting battles that they think are their own.

Overcoming: Using Coping Strategies in Academic Life

Problems encountered and coping strategies suggested are discussed in light of literature, and include: (1) to assume that most problems have an external sociohistorical nature, (2) to realize the central role of mentorship, (3) to stop replying to expressions of stereotypic views and to use energy and time more productively, (4) to receive and respond selectively to collegial and student feedback, (5) to be proactive for establishing collaborative activities, and (6) to have clear long-term research and career development objectives.

It is not only me!! . The first lesson refers to learning that negative attitudes, misconceptions, and prejudices held towards me by some colleagues and students represent social problems affecting historically this country. Thus, I have learned that these negative reactions are not my own personal problems, but that these reactions are due to external problems. I have also learned that my case is different than the case of other female majority scholars doing traditional research, or other male minority scholars doing ethnic research. I have unique and additive characteristics, I am a female minority

junior faculty member who identifies with ethnic research. Below I will examine each of these additive factors in light of some relevant literature.

Let me examine first the situation of women in academe. Boice (1992) acknowledged that although, white women came from a similar high socioeconomic status and parental educational level as their white male colleagues; they also struggle for equality, and are not likely to escape the sexism and stigmatization resulting from unclear expectations and subjective evaluations. He stated, "They (women) suffer discouragement and are made feel incompetent, invisible, and unwelcome by their male colleagues" (Boice, 1992, p. 272). Boice (1992) also stated, "Women generally evidence more anxiety, stress, loneliness ... than their male colleagues" (p. 272). Another factor pointed out by Boice (1992) is that women are more likely to be underrepresented in their departments, and this situation may bring new styles of behaving into mainstream academic life. He stated, "Women bring their relational and affective emphases to campuses" (Boice, 1992, p. 273). One interesting event that I have observed in academic areas traditionally perceived as feminine, such as education and psychology, is that scholars are more inclined to engage into collaborative projects. In contrast, through my husband's experience in engineering, I have observed that in academic areas traditionally perceived as masculine, scholars are more inclined to compete aggressively in research endeavors. Thus, as Boiced (1992) was pointing out, different styles of interaction may result from whether or not women are present in academe.

Next, I would like to examine the situation of minority, female and male, faculty in academe. Some authors have referred to the sociohistorical nature of how minority faculty are perceived in American universities. For example, García (1993) pointed out that proponents of the merits of cultural diversity in schools of education defend that minority faculty provide role models, and that their presence challenges stereotypic views of minorities held by members of the educational community. García (1993) recommended that when recruiting, hiring, and retaining minority faculty they should not

be stereotyped and be judged by their race or gender, but by their individual academic qualifications and contributions. Moreover, García (1993) as well as Padilla (1994) have pointed out that minority scholars are in danger of been viewed as the only ones who can be knowledgeable about and represent institutions in minority issues (called by Padilla, 1994, "taxation). In relation to this stereotypic view of minority faculty, García (1993) stated, "Minorities are viewed as exotic individuals who possess an innate mastery of minority affairs" (p. 423). I think that the core of the problem is that we are confounding race, ethnicity, and culture with educational ideologies and philosophies. Being a minority is not based only on our genetic endowment that defines racial phenotypic characteristics. Instead being a minority means sharing with an ethnic or a cultural group an identity that is expressed in a language, values, traditions, beliefs, and a living style.

Finally, some authors have acknowledged the additive complexity of the experience of junior female minority faculty in academe. For instance, Boice (1992) reported that feelings of isolation are the most stressful emotional reaction experienced by new faculty. However, Boice (1992) pointed out, that in the case of minority and female faculty pressures of adjusting to a new campus are even harder due to the added problem of being unappreciated by colleagues who doubt their credentials and worth, and by feeling overworked and out of place. As Boice (1992) stated, "The result can be intolerable" (p. 256).

Central role of mentorship. My experience has also taught me a second lesson referring to the central importance of finding mentors inside and outside my own institution in order to develop my career as a junior female minority scholar. I can say that during these two years in academia I have matured. Now, I feel liberated by belonging to a research community of ethnic researchers, who advocate for change. I also feel that I am already making a change by being present as a minority female junior faculty member doing ethnic research at an American university in the 1990's.

Several authors had referred to the valuable contribution of mentors for the success of junior minority faculty. Trueba (1993) has suggested that universities, and thus scholars and mentors, can empower minorities, and therefore contribute to form a multicultural America. According to García (1993), there are some mentor structured programs for junior minority faculty; but usually still the most efficient channel is the informal one, in which some fortunate new faculty find mentors due to an individual proactive attitude. That is, if few junior and senior minority scholars exist, especially women, then the ones who made it through the mainstream system, could do so because of the presence of committed mentors who acted as intermediate social agents creating opportunities to succeed. In addition, García (1993) pointed out that "the junior faculty scholar species" is endangered by being assigned only large undergraduate classes, a teaching load that jeopardizes the growth of their research agenda in their area of expertise. I truly believe that this problem of a heavy teaching load for women minority faculty can be changed dramatically due to the presence of mentors.

Another study that contributed to analyze and understand the situation of new faculty has been conducted by the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (Trautvetter, 1993). The sample for this survey study on faculty stress consisted of 177 newly hired tenure-track faculty, of which 53% were women and 21% were faculty of color. Based on this study, Trautvetter (1993) identified five stress factors in majority and minority junior faculty: personal stress (i.e., lack of personal time, managing household responsibilities), teaching load and meetings, research demands, and promotion stress. Items causing some stress were identified by male and female faculty of color most frequently as being review and promotion process, and research and publishing demands. Overall stress levels were higher for female majority and minority faculty in comparison to male counterparts; and personal stress was also higher for females in research first class universities. Some of the strategies to cope stress mentioned by junior majority and minority faculty interviewed and surveyed by

Trautvetter (1993) were to engage in recreational activities and get-aways, to seek advice, to change expectations, to invest less time in class preparation and more time in writing, and to delegate responsibilities.

Moreover, in relation to teaching responsibilities, Trautvetter (1993) reported that: (1) female faculty of color devoted more time to teaching in comparison to their male and female white colleagues; (2) male faculty of color spend more time on research than female faculty of color; (3) female majority and minority faculty lean slightly more to research than teaching; and (4) all junior faculty (including female and male minority and majority faculty) carried fairly heavy teaching loads and spent more time on teaching than they perceived their institutions expected and than they prefe[illegible]delation to junior faculty perception of service, Trautvetter (1993) reported that female minority and majority faculty in first class research universities perceived that the institution expected more time spent on service than did males. Trautvetter (1993) also reported that only one-third of all junior faculty interviewed and surveyed, including minority and majority and both genders, had mentors found or assigned. Interestingly, it was also reported that females are more likely to have another female as their mentor.

Austin (1993), reported that results found by the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment showed consistent patterns with comparable studies conducted about the experiences, challenges, and stresses of junior faculty (Austin played the role of an invited observed in the Institute chaired by R. Menges). However, she also pointed out that there are individual differences as to what kind of stresses are experienced by junior faculty. I think that some of the most important factors pointing to individual differences are gender and minority status, and whether or not the research area departs from mainstream traditional ideologies.

In her presentation, Austin (1993) identified some sources of stresses for junior faculty: (1) moving to a new community without the presence of the previously established social network; (2) having unrealistic self-expectations, usually assuming that

they have to know how to succeed independently; (3) experiencing stress from teaching responsibilities due to lack of experience or lack of support from colleagues; (4) feeling the pressure to develop a research agenda and to publish without receiving mentorship; (5) feeling that they are given inadequate feedback and conflicting messages about the roles and responsibilities that they are expected to fulfill; (6) perceiving that the evaluation criteria are vague or even non existent, resulting in a subjective process that can lead to discriminatory practices; (7) feeling that they are not knowledgeable about institutional norms and resources; (8) feeling pressured by lack of time to be successful with long-term research goals; (9) experiencing disappointment regarding collegial interaction which results in feelings of isolation; (10) feeling challenged by balancing personal and professional responsibilities; and (11) experiencing departmental and institutional politics.

Some of the strategies that Austin (1993) suggested in her presentation for assisting junior faculty stem from three categories: (1) strategies for junior faculty to use for managing stress, (2) strategies for institutions, and (3) strategies for graduate schools to prepare future faculty. Some of the strategies suggested by Austin (1993) for junior faculty are: (1) the establishment of a work plan with priorities and goals; (2) the arrangement of work time by allocating and practicing uninterrupted time for research and writing activities, and (3) the allocation of time for hobbies and recreational activities. Among the strategies suggested by Austin (1993) for institutions are: (1) the consideration of messages being sent by administrators regarding expectations to junior faculty, (2) the delivery of feedback for ways in which junior faculty can meet those expectations, (3) the provision of information by administrators about institutional resources for supporting their teaching and research activities, (4) the allocation of resources for junior faculty career development (e.g., travel money, secretarial assistance), (5) the provision of development programs and opportunities for assisting junior faculty in teaching and research activities, and (6) the presence of avenues for

collegial interaction such as informal and formal opportunities to meet colleagues. Thus, graduate schools can prepare better their students interested in pursuing an academic job by providing more preparation for teaching and public service responsibilities.

Austin (1993) also recalled her years as an assistant professor to be stressful because of not having security of tenure and time spent worrying rather than using her mental energy to be productive. However, she also recognized that these early years in her academic career were also rewording because she could be concerned about her career, and being given a reduced teaching load and fewer committee assignments. However, Austin (1993) pointed out that presently universities are changing their role and function in society and are expected to solve our societal problems. Then, junior faculty are also feeling this new need, and are responding by directing their research to produce applied solutions to social problems. Austin (1993) viewed this situation as unfair for junior faculty, as they are assigned a new role without the assurance of tenure and face new challenges that escape the traditional criteria based on which their research work would be judged. I think that this high level of stress lived by junior faculty that Austin was referring to increases for ethnic researchers who are committed to play the role of advocates for minority social problems. Moreover, the evaluation of research accomplishments will be particularly unfair for ethnic researchers as their research paradigm differs from the traditional mainstream criteria that is based on established ideologies to maintain the status quo. In relation to evaluation of minority faculty, Boice (1992) pointed out that judging minority faculty is a subjective process that may lead to discriminatory practices.

Select the battles that you want to fight. The third lesson that I have learned for coping with stress in academic life is to stop replying to expressions of stereotypic views of junior, female, minority, ethnic researchers. Instead, I now use my energy more productively by doing research and mentoring minority and majority students interested in ethnic research. We need to develop much needed theoretical and applied knowledge

to serve better our minority children within a democratic society that respects and values cultural diversity. Thus, I have learned to select the battles that I want to fight by recognizing the important role of universities for infusing change in knowledge paradigms and in social perceptions and actions taken for educating minorities.

According to Trueba (1993) universities have a major role in transmitting new knowledge and democratic values and respect for cultural diversity. However, it is still the case that most courses are taught by faculty who transmit information by rewarding rote memorization of traditional views of education centered on mainstream society' s values. Trueba (1993) stated, "Critical pedagogs insist that schools and universities are not neutral institutions graciously transmitting knowledge to all, but places where the power relation and social order are perpetuated" (p. 53). That is, we cannot assume the fallacy that knowledge is "objective", but rather knowledge construction is a "subjective" process. When constructing new conceptual knowledge, cognitive and affective processes stemming from the personality of the individual are interacting; including misconceptions, lack of knowledge, prejudices, attributions, values, and attitudes.

> Trueba (1993) stated, "We as scholars within an academic setting have the potential and the responsibility to create a better understanding of the nature of race and ethnicity, and to help solve racial and ethnic problems, and to develop the necessary knowledge and strategies to heal ethnic and racial hatred in democratic societies" (p. 52).

Moreover, Trueba (1993) called attention to the present passive role that American universities are playing in solving contemporary social, political, and educational problems in America. Inertia that we junior minority scholars can no longer tolerate! Still faculty who advocate for reform and change of values, and for a multicultural and pluralistic society are scarce. As Trueba (1993) pointed out, universities are currently avoiding their social responsibility and mission to develop in

students respect and endorsement of values within a democratic ideology. We junior minority faculty are responsible to play a leadership role in educating undergraduate and graduate students to gain sensitivity and knowledge; to change their misconceptions, prejudices, and negative attitudes toward minority groups; and to assume an advocacy role in order to become mentors of minority students. Thus, we junior faculty need to recognize our important role in becoming leaders in changing the role of universities in the development of new social knowledge and educational paradigms.

Be selective when receiving collegial feedback. A fourth coping strategy that has proven important for me in reducing my job stress level is to be selective in listening to feedback regarding my academic accomplishments. We, junior faculty, tend to give importance to feedback from colleagues and students as findings on a new faculty project on stress and feedback from the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment demonstrate. Trautvetter (1993) reported that faculty held a higher regard for colleagues' feedback on their scholarly work, and that feedback from students about teaching was also held in high regard. However, for us, female minority junior faculty, it is extremely important to be very selective in attributing value to colleagues' feedback on scholarly activities. We need to take into consideration the ideology and school of thought defended by the person giving feedback. Thus, I have learned to give credibility to feedback received from colleagues and administrators who endorse the same research and teaching philosophy, ideologies, and schools of thought that I identify with; and who are successful at a national and/or international level in their careers. I have also have learned to value effort made by other ethnic researchers to recognize the merit of junior minority scholars. It has been my experience that recognition received from the community of ethnic researchers helps tremendously in establishing credibility during the early years of my academic career.

Moreover, several authors have called our attention for the need to create a new academic identity for minority scholars who are interested in ethnic research. For

instance, Gilkes (1982) suggested to minority scholars to abandon efforts to belong to the mainstream academic culture and to identify with their own self-identity and with their community achievements and look for the approval of kindred colleagues. Padilla (1994) also recognized the need for minority scholars to develop our own associations, journals, and academic structure. I believe that the generation of a new community of scholars is especially important for ethnic researchers, as our theoretical and philosophical framework departs from the traditional mainstream paradigm. Thus, we need to be very selective in listening to feedback and criticism from colleagues.

Be proactive for establishing collaborative research. A fifth useful coping strategy for me has proven to be proactive for engaging in collaborative research projects with colleagues at universities and school districts, and with graduate students who are interested in ethnic research. Thus, I continue applying the mentorship model that I was initiated in as a graduate student: to do collaborative work with colleagues and students. Colleagues and students form a support group for me, allowing me to delegate responsibilities and to accomplish more publications and conference presentations; to merge teaching, mentoring, research, and service activities; and to develop network relationships with colleagues and students that have proven to be resourceful for my career development (e.g., opening opportunities to meet leaders in my academic field of expertise, gaining local and national visibility, establishing new research collaborations, etc.). Boice (1992), reported that most successful new faculty develop connections between their teaching and research by giving their undergraduate and graduate students opportunities to collaborate with them in research. Boice (1992) reported that successful faculty showed initiative and mastery of teaching skills by modeling critical thinking, teaching cognitive strategies for problem solving, coaching and scaffolding students, and arranging opportunities for collaborative inquiry among students and themselves.

Boice (1992) described productive new faculty as having: (1) positive attitudes about students and colleagues and comparatively balanced work habits showing

involvement and perseverance; (2) tacit knowledge for skills including assuming a proactive attitude in establishing rapport and supportive interaction with colleagues and students; (3) a spontaneous style of taking risks in their research field and teaching style, allowing students to take the lead in classroom discussions; and (4) resilience by persisting after experiencing frustration in seeking collegial support, and depersonalizing feelings of isolation and underestimation.

"Keep your eyes in the prize". A sixth coping strategy that has helped me a lot is "keeping my eyes on the prize." That is, having clear long-term research and career development objectives, such as writing activities, has helped to organize my priorities and short-term goals. Accomplishing short-term objectives has also helped me to reduce my stress level. The resulting positive feeling is primarily due to feedback received from administrators and the personal satisfaction felt by experiencing achievement and closure.

One way of "keeping your eyes on the prize" during the long-term career planning for achieving tenure, is for new faculty to develop writing skills. Boice (1992) suggested a connection between teaching and writing activities, by reporting that "unproductive writers among new faculty generally taught in context-only fashion and did little to involve students as active learners" (p. 98). He also reported that women and minorities were disproportionately represented among unproductive writers probably because they felt more pressured to dedicate more energy and effort to service over other scholarly activities, such as writing. According to Boice (1992), skills and attitudes for task management, including regimen in allocating limiting periods of involvement in activities such as networking and teaching to have time for writing; remains tacit knowledge that new faculty members are supposed to discover by themselves, and that senior faculty do not know how to teach.

Boice (1992) reported that new faculty often had the common misconception that writing required ideal undisrupted blocks of time; and therefore it was put off due to business in teaching leading to procastination and feeling compelled to wait for

inspiration. Boice (1992) recommended balance and moderation in writing, by allocating time for their own scholarly work every day and week, so that new faculty feel in control of their time and accomplishments. Boice (1992) also recommended some cognitive strategies for improving writing fluency in new faculty that have proven to be effective: (1) avoiding being self-conscious about editors and having negative thoughts during first drafts; (2) establishing regimen of daily writing for productive short sessions, making writing a moderate priority with short-term realistic goals; (3) developing networking skills of dealing with audience, co-authors, editors, and reviewers; and (4) balancing writing with teaching and collegiality by using students and colleagues as resources for discussing ideas that they are writing about.

Thus, overall the six coping strategies presented here derive from my own lived experience and are supported by the experience of other minority scholars as well as studies conducted on new faculty. Learning how to become a successful faculty member, especially when we are different, within the still traditional mainstream system in academia is a challenging process. However, very little has been written yet by us, minority scholars, who need to tell our stories with the objective of sharing the tacit knowledge that we could have acquired. I believe that writing about our experiences as minority faculty can initiate a much needed dialogue among newly hired minority colleagues. By establishing a networking process newly hired minority faculty may feel less intimidated when knowing that there are commonalties across the problems that they are facing in their experience in American universities. This networking experience will provide newly hired minority faculty with an opportunity for realizing the external sociohistorical nature of problems. In addition, by establishing communication among minority scholars coping strategies may be learned explicitly, leading to productive mentorship relationships and successful careers for newly hired minority faculty.

## Conclusions

I want to conclude by restating my belief that sharing our lived experiences is a step in the right direction for making progress in the present status of junior minority faculty in American universities. In order to solve a problem, first the problem needs to be acknowledged. So that, it is primarily the responsibility of minority scholars to make sure that their voices are heard. Thus, we can only benefit from telling our stories about the additive challenge of belonging to different minority groups within academe at the same time: being a female, junior, minority faculty member, who identifies with ethnic research, and who may have a dual career couple status in academe. Many similarities are found among the experiences of junior faculty, female faculty, minority faculty, and ethnic researchers. However, when we add all the above factors, a very unique and complex situation emerges, in which the individual is challenged by cumulative external sociohistorical factors expressed in how colleagues and students react to her presence in academe. Thus, I believe that there is value involved in sharing our individual experiences, first to recognize that there is a problem; and secondly, and most importantly, to acknowledge that there are similarities among our experiences and that the nature of the problem is external.

I also believe that one of the most important consequences of telling our experiences is the establishment of a network of mentorship relationships in academe that starts very early on, at the level of undergraduate education, and never ends in the academic ladder. Telling our own experiences also means to assume responsibility and an advocacy and mentorship role for improving the situation that junior female minority faculty currently lived on campuses across America. Mentors and mentees need to re-energize from each other, and to work as a team that collaborates for the establishment of a new era of equality and diversity in the educational and social system. I feel compelled to prepare undergraduate and graduate students interested in becoming scholars, and also

to establish a network with my fellow newly hired colleagues. I hope that my own story can help minority students and new faculty to be better prepare to face this extremely challenging situation. I have tried to present to them some vicarious learning situations in the form of lived experiences and coping strategies learned.

In sum, it has been my major motivation to write this paper to convey the message to the academic community that we do not need to face external sociohistorical problems alone. Instead, we need to undergo a major insightful realization leading to liberation. I trust that my message can motivate junior female minority scholars in ethnic research to have an awakening experience and to realize that: It is not only me!

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